

## AMENDMENTS TO THE SPECIFICATION

Please amend the specification as follows:

**On page 1, after the title, insert the following:**

--This application is a divisional of Application Serial No. 09/546,997 filed April 12, 2000.--

**The first full paragraph on page 3:**

Additionally, operations such as metal leaching often have mines and plants located in remote areas and in countries lacking the infrastructure necessary to handle the extremely dangerous concentrated sulfuric acid. Most leaching operations use aqueous solutions of sulfuric acid that contain less ~~less~~ than 20 grams per liter of sulfuric acid. With current technology, sulfuric acid is made in very concentrated form and then shipped to the point of use where it is diluted with water to produce the aqueous solutions used in most leaching operations. Accordingly, it would be advantageous to have a process which permits generation of aqueous sulfuric acid solutions very near the point of use and eliminates the hazards associated with the transport and handling of concentrated sulfuric acid.

**The first full paragraph on page 6:**

According to one aspect of the invention a process for producing sulfuric acid is provided. The process comprises contacting an aqueous solution with a sulfur material in the form of a pile. The sulfur material is selected from the group consisting of elemental sulfur, sulfur-containing ores, sulfide-containing ores, sulfur-containing minerals, sulfide-containing minerals and combinations thereof. The pile additionally contains acidophilic microbes and,

preferably, a packing material. The pile is aerated with an oxygen-containing gas and a liquid stream is withdrawn from ~~for~~ the pile. A first portion of the liquid stream is returned to the pile for further contacting with the pile and a second portion of said liquid stream is taken as an acid product.